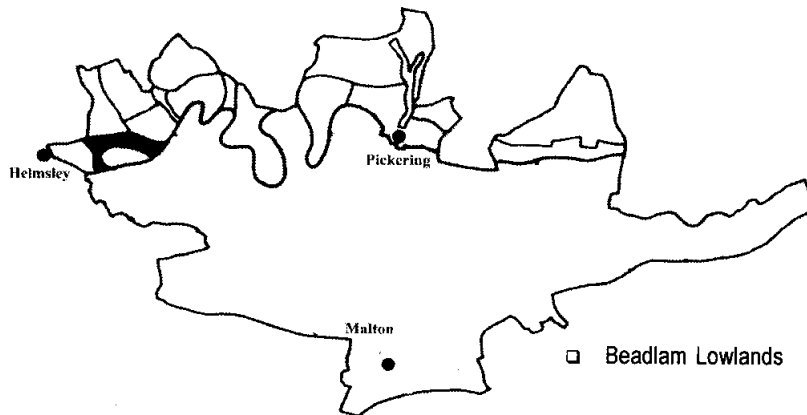


Area B Riverside Farmland



Key Characteristic Features

- *Shallow, low lying flat-bottomed valley.*
- *Medium to large, regular shaped fields.*
- *Enclosed due to proximity to elevated land and screening effect of the relatively high tree cover.*
- *Sinuous strips of deciduous woodland along river.*

Landform and Context

Within the Fringe of the Moors, the *riverside farmland* is a geographically discreet landscape character type, which is centred on the river Riccal. It is located to the east of Helmsley and to the south of the A170. At the western end of the Vale of Pickering is an area of characteristically subtle, yet influential, geology and terrain. It is an area where the boundary between the Vale and the Fringe of the Moors becomes less distinct.

Lying between 45-55m AOD, the valley is surrounded by low hills that rise to approximately 70m AOD and form part of the *undulating farmland*. Although the landscape is dominated by the river Riccal, which drains to the west of the area, Gale Lane, which lies to the east, marks a watershed to the east of which, small streams drain eastwards into Hodge Beck.

The valley is a relatively narrow and linear landscape feature and is confined to an alluvial strip some 400-600m wide. Overlying Kimmeridge clay, this alluvial strip is perhaps the most important component affecting local landscape character.

With its alluvial soils and flat, low lying topography, the *riverside farmland* exhibits features more characteristic of local landscape types in the Vale of Pickering. However, due to its slightly higher elevation and, when set in a wider geographical context, the landscape of this area clearly forms part of the Fringe of the Moors.

Land Use and Landscape Pattern

This landscape is strongly rural in character, predominantly arable, although with an increasing proportion of pastures near the river. The arable fields tend to be medium to large, regular in shape and bounded by hedgerows of hawthorn with elder and locally high concentrations of holly. Near the river, the pastoral fields are smaller and more irregular in shape, a pattern that possibly dates back to before the main enclosures periods of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On the western edge of Wombledon, a pattern of smaller, more linear fields represents a historically important relic of the medieval open field cultivation system.

Although regularly arranged woodland blocks, such as Spring Wood are present, most of the woodlands tend to be more linear, particularly along water-courses, notably the river Riccal where sinuous riverside woodlands dominated by alder occur. Elsewhere, trees are more dispersed and are mainly associated with hedgerows. Trees are most commonly oak and ash with some holly.

Settlement

The only settlement in this area is the small village of Wombleton that lies to the east of the area. The village, although originally linearly arranged along Main Street, has in recent years become more clustered in character. Typical of many villages in the district most buildings, particularly the older ones along Main Street, tend to be constructed of limestone with red pantile roofs. The village core has a high degree of visual cohesiveness and overall attractiveness derived from the unity of architecture and use of these traditional constructional materials.

Farms tend to be set back on slightly elevated land at the edge of the valley, avoiding the immediate river corridor with its propensity for flooding. Most of these farms are constructed of limestone with red pantile roofs and often include other buildings that are in keeping with the scale and character of the area. However, twentieth century agricultural requirements combined with the introduction of modern constructional materials and building technologies are resulting in the introduction of larger scale buildings that appear out of place and visually intrusive.

Subjective Responses

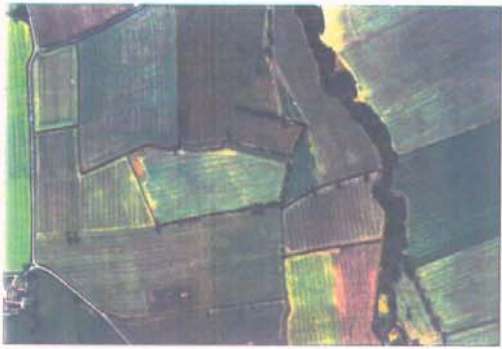
This landscape has a strongly rural character and presence. Despite proximity to the busy A170, it has a slightly secluded feel and is characterised by a sense of enclosure and containment. This is due to the higher land that surrounds it including the North York Moors National Park, which abuts the northern and western edge of the area.

Sensitivity to Change

Given the likelihood of flooding, the narrow river floodplain and valley is unlikely to be under pressure for built development. However, proximity to the North York Moors National Park and the popular town of Helmsley introduce a number of recreational pressures that the area has little ability to accommodate. The landscape mosaic is one of generally large sized arable fields giving way to smaller more rectilinear fields around Wombleton and, close to the river Riccal, a pastoral scenery with a more organic field pattern. Whilst the mosaic of fields is one of the area's most significant features, it has in recent years been diluted through changes in land management such as, field enlargement and hedgerow and tree removal. Agricultural improvement, including land drainage, has influenced the character of the river Riccal. However, unlike many similar sized streams in the Vale of Pickering, the stream retains a locally meandering character and many streamside trees. Close to Wombleton, the historic linear field pattern is vulnerable to damage and loss, particularly given its location in the midst of productive farmland.

Area B

Riverside Farmland



Source: Environment Agency

River Riccal (GR 637 831)

Farmsteads are often large-scale and include mature trees that provide a degree of local enclosure

Surrounding rising land serves to provide a sense of enclosure



Beadlam Grange

Lanes tend to have wide verges and are contained by hedgerows and hedgerow trees

Linear woodlands extend alongside the river Riccal



View looking southwards from the A170 west of Beadlam Grange

Landscape Guidelines

Landscape Strategy

This is a predominantly low lying landscape of flat and undulating pastures and arable fields bounded by a strong pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Any strategy should seek to conserve and locally enhance this distinctive landscape which shares characteristics common to both the Fringe of the Moors and the Vale of Pickering.

Land Management

Land management practices should aim to conserve the existing pattern of fields and hedgerows. Further field enlargement should be avoided.

The river Riccal is a key feature, introducing a smaller, more organic and intimate scale in this otherwise open landscape. Riverside features such as new tree planting should closely mirror its linear winding form to give the river a stronger visual presence in the landscape.

Recent trends towards the canalisation and dredging of the watercourses should be resisted and traditional river management encouraged. It is particularly important to allow the river to develop its natural course with seasonal flood and dynamic erosion patterns. Specialist studies will be necessary to ensure the best approach to maximise visual, ecological and drainage requirements of the area.

All areas of wetland or water related features, including damp unimproved grassland along the river Riccal, should be conserved and enhanced wherever possible. Riverbank and natural streamside vegetation should be protected and preserved and the conversion of arable farmland to permanent grassland encouraged alongside riverbanks to create a buffer zone and provide valuable wildlife habitats. Any re-seeding of arable land should use a suitable grassland seed mix, of local provenance where possible, which reflects the species found in unimproved grasslands within the local area.

The potential for locally widening the river channel to create marshy scrapes that could be integrated with existing remnant ditches and channels should be examined. All such work should take into account the possible presence of bank nesting birds such as sand martin, whose nest sites should be protected. meadows should be explored and consideration

given to the management of farmland as seasonally wet pastures to maximise the ecological and visual potential of the river corridor.

Field Boundaries

All existing hedgerows should be conserved, strengthened and managed along their existing alignments. Traditional hedgerow management techniques should be promoted, avoiding mechanical over-flailing.

Field hedgerows should be replanted along historic field boundaries where they have been removed due to agricultural intensification and field enlargement. New hedgerows should be designed to strengthen and restore the historic field pattern, using locally occurring native species. Priority should be given to the restoration of a historic field hedgerow pattern around Wombieton, where recent years have seen degradation and loss of the traditional small scale linear fields.

Hedgerow trees, particularly oak, ash and holly are a characteristic feature of this landscape. Wherever possible, these should be retained to strengthen the existing visual structure of the farmland mosaic, concentrating near villages and farms, along lanes and the corridor of the river Riccal. Individual trees could be positioned to provide visual punctuation for example at lane bends or to frame particular views.

New hedgerow tree planting can be achieved either through the planting of standard trees or by allowing selected saplings to develop, or a combination of both. Whichever method is preferred, adequate protection from mechanical cutters is essential during establishment.

Trees and Woodlands

Trees in this landscape are primarily associated with the corridor of the river Riccal. Here they are grouped in sinuous lines that emphasise the line of the river particularly when viewed from the surrounding higher ground.

Existing tree groups should be conserved and managed to achieve a balanced age structure by coppicing, thinning and replanting as necessary. To retain the existing landscape pattern, new tree planting should comprise alder and goat willow at key locations and where the riverbed follows a sinuous course. Any trees requiring tree surgery or removal should be checked for roosting bats before any work is carried out.

Existing mature willows should be selectively pollarded to contribute to the distinctive visual character of the riverside landscape and strengthen the visual influence of the river in the wider landscape.

Settlements and Buildings

The characteristic isolated traditional farm complexes should be conserved where possible. Sensitive conversion of redundant farm buildings to other uses may be appropriate if the traditional architectural features and the rural setting of the buildings are retained. Particular buildings may not be suited to alteration without a loss of character. Any alterations to farm buildings, should take into account their use by birds such as swallow, house martin and barn owl and by roosting bats.

Infrastructure

The small scale character of the rural lanes and tracks should be conserved and verges and banks managed to encourage native grassland and wildflower species.

Priorities for Action

- *Conserve and restore hedgerows along historic alignments.*
- *Give priority to the conservation and enhancement of the riverside landscape.*
- *Recent trends toward canalisation and dredging of watercourses should be resisted and traditional river management encouraged.*
- *Explore possibilities for the restoration of traditional flood meadows for hay making and subsequent grazing.*
- *Encourage the conversion of arable farmland to permanent pasture along the riverbanks to create a buffer zone and provide improved ecological habitats.*